



REP. TODD ROKITA & INDIANA COMMUNITY LEADERS HOST  
-SCHOOL SAFETY SUMMIT-

4TH DISTRICT ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION  
OPIOIDS AND CYBERBULLLYING

FALL 2017

# FORWARD BY U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TODD ROKITA

The second School Safety Roundtable Discussion brought together schools, law enforcement, community leaders, and subject matter experts to discuss how to effectively make our schools safer for students and teachers.

This report recounts a discussion of two crises that are prominent in our childrens' schools across the nation: The opioid epidemic and cyberbullying. They are affecting both students and their teachers daily. Collectively, the group came together with one goal: to raise awareness of and discuss solutions to end these crises.

Throughout the report you will read about different challenges and possible solutions on these topics. This report is a collection of ideas that were shared to bring these problems to light and offer potential solutions. By design this document should aid further conversation that needs to materialize across Indiana and the nation.

Our panelists and moderators are true champions in our community as they passionately motivate others to create change within our school system. These leaders inspire me to continue the fight for students and teachers on Capitol Hill to ensure our schools become safer for current and future generations to come.

Thank you to those who participated in the discussion. Your work will help ensure our students stay safe while receiving a quality education. I hope you find this information helpful as you explore ways to improve the safety of students throughout Indiana.



Above: Congressman Rokita speaks with School Safety Summit attendees, Principal Cooney, with Plainfield Community School Corporation, and Maddie.  
Top: Congressman Rokita poses with panelist U.S. Attorney Josh Minkler and attendee.



## INTRODUCTION:

In October 2017, U.S. Representative Todd Rokita convened a leadership summit of high school principals, teachers, students, law enforcement, community leaders, and experts on opioid abuse and cyberbullying in Plainfield, Indiana. The purpose was to share concerns and ideas on how to keep our children safe in their schools. This event was the second in a series of school safety summits hosted by the congressman, the first being the School Facility Safety Roundtable Discussion in 2015.



Panelist Dustin Noonkester, President and Founder of Brady's Hope, discusses the circumstances that caused his son Brady to become addicted and overdose on opioids.



Panelists discussing issues concerning opioids and cyberbullying with attendees



David Woodward, Director of the Indiana School Safety Specialist Academy within the Indiana Department of Education, participating on the panels.

The discussion was divided into three segments. The first two segments were panels on Opioids and Cyberbullying. These served as an introduction to the issues and in-depth accounts as to the panelists' personal and professional experiences. The third segment was a group discussion where community members were given the opportunity to join the conversation and ask questions of the panelists.



# OPIOIDS

## CHALLENGES DISCUSSED:

- **Marijuana as a gateway drug**

Studies suggest those who use marijuana are five times more likely to use pharmaceutical drugs and twice as likely to use heroin. The social environment marijuana users' encounter can often lead to the introduction and use of new, more dangerous substances.

- **Over prescribing opioids**

A CDC analysis found that for every 100 Hoosiers there are over 100 opioid prescriptions. Some of these patients are abusing the drugs themselves but a number of them are selling them to others. This practice has led to the high number of Hoosiers who have become addicted to opioids.

- **School systems rejecting programs designed to prevent use**

Oftentimes, schools have not implemented programs that could potentially prevent drug use among students because they claim that opioid abuse is not a problem in their school.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS DISCUSSED:

- **Encourage people to go through rehabilitation services**

Those who have been found with opioid addiction will serve a set amount of time within a rehabilitation center to combat the addiction.

- **Recognizing drug addiction as a medical and criminal issue**

This will block the gateway effect of the drug, and help prevent some recreational users from succumbing to opioid addiction.

- **Do not legalize marijuana**

Any possession or distribution of the drug will lead to criminal charges. The drug should only be used when prescribed by a licensed practicing professional.



**Q:** “Do you think that treating drug related crimes is a medical issue rather than a criminal issue would be more effective in rehabilitating the addict?” - Plainfield high school student

U.S. Attorney Minkler – *“There is actually an ongoing debate about this between the medical community and the criminal justice community. Obviously, drug addiction is a medical disorder. Drug addiction is a health issue. Just like people who have diabetes, they go to the doctor to get legitimate medication people who have drug addictions go get drugs off the streets, illegally. You commit property crimes to be able to fund your drugs. Whether it is done through a law enforcement program or a medical program, it has to be legitimate. This is a tricky problem because the easiest essay in English class to write is a conflict piece. This is not the case here. I think it is a medical issue and I think it is a law enforcement issue. I think that both sides need to come together to overcome that. My thought process is that if you are a drug dealer you deserve to go to prison. We need to be committed to that as a state, as a community, and as a people. That is where you cross the line. There is one answer to that. If you have a drug addiction problem, we treat it differently.”*

**Q:** “What educational based activities at schools are or should be doing to support our kids?” - Representative Behning

Dustin Noonkester – *“We do a lot of presentations where a lot of times, our presentations are absolutely free, and schools often times deny us. That’s an issue. High schools need to have drug free clubs. These schools should be jumping all over this. You have so many individuals who are willing to come in and do the work for you. There are a lot of people who are willing to do projects for you. So, there are a lot of things we can do within the schools. We just need the schools to give us the key.”*



U.S. Attorney Josh Minkler discusses the challenges schools face daily with growing opioid abuse.



Q:

“The prevention message has a strong presence in high school, however; it does not seem to reach these students who have become addicted. How can the prevention messages be improved?” - Brownsburg high school student



Above: Summit moderators, State Representative Robert Behning and State Senator John Crane field questions from the audience for panelists.  
Top: Students listen intently to the discussion while awaiting the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists.

U.S. Attorney Josh Minkler –*“I agree with what you said. I think kids are more susceptible to anecdotal evidence, real life stories. What we have done with individuals in cases like Scott County is give real life examples. In Marion County one school who had allowed it had a judge whose son had died to drug overdose. They played the 911 call in his case. He came home high and told his parents that they are right and was going to get help tomorrow. He then went to bed and never woke up. In 1980s, it was ‘Just Say No’, it didn’t work. The problem is people are able to make a choice. That is why our president and attorney general decided to make the decision they did. And our culture mocked them. That is the culture our educators have to deal with. Celebrities, sport figures, and other popular people glorify drug use. Some people want marijuana legalized when teachers and administrators know kids are a lot harder to educate when using marijuana. We all know from Dustin’s story that when you start off with marijuana that you are much more likely to move to something harder. That’s the culture we live in. it’s a difficult problem to have.”*





# CYBERBULLYING

## CHALLENGES DISCUSSED:

- **Unlimited accessibility to social media and other forms of online communication**

Students are now connected all day every day and have no escape from seeing negativity and harassment.

- **Parents are not setting a positive example for their kids**

Parents who display hostility on social media should keep in mind that their kids see what they post and mimic their behaviors.

- **Hidden identity on the web**

Students are being deceived by people who are not who they say they are. Then those people exploit these children in various ways.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS DISCUSSED:

- **Parents being more involved with their children and encourage them to stand up for their friends**

Parents will be able to recognize various red flags that could be considered cyberbullying if they have access to their kids' social networking accounts. If the supporter does not feel comfortable standing up to everyone, encourage them to uplift the victim outside the chat or message.

- **Supervise social media account access & limit screen time**

This will help prevent unscrupulous adults and predators from accessing students' accounts under fake names and circumstances and allow for children to escape from bullying.

# CYBERBULLYING DISCUSSION



The audience gets involved during the open discussion segment of the summit.



Assistant U.S. Attorney Tiffany J. Preston and Dr. Kathryn Siegfried-Spellar participating on the cyberbullying panel.



Congressman Rokita provides opening remarks at the School Safety Summit.

**Q:** “Should high schools offer a class on mental health in order to promote awareness and empathy? Many students aren’t able to recognize mental disorders in themselves or recognize them in others. What do you say to that?” - Plainfield high school student

**Dr. Kathryn Seigfried-Spellar** - *“I’d say, unfortunately, there’s stigma around some of that. That might be something happening – there’s anxiety and depression. We see victims of cyberbullying experience these – also suicidal thoughts. They are dropping out of school or changing schools and again it affects every kid. But in general – you know, I think education awareness and moving it away from a stigma can be fantastic.”*

*“And I think it speaks to one of the topics we just discussed, the bystander effect. Obviously, we all have a role to play, whether it is our job or someone else’s. Or as the adage goes change starts in the mirror, with each one of us.”*

**State Senator John Crane**





"A special thank you to each of our panelists, moderators, and the guests who attended and participated in the summit. Only by working together will we be able to help solve the very real problems of opioid abuse and cyberbullying in our schools and communities."

## PANELISTS:

**United States Attorney Josh Minkler** - Participated in both panels, Combating Opioids in Schools and Cyber Bullying leading to Cyber Crimes. Serves in the Southern District of Indiana.

**Assistant United States Attorney Tiffany J. Preston** - Participated in the Cyber Bullying leading to Cyber Crimes panel. Serves in the Southern District of Indiana.

**Kathryn C. Seigfried-Spellar, Ph.D.** - Participated in Cyber Bullying Leading to Cyber Crimes panel. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer and Information Technology at Purdue University. She has also has multiple publications.

**Dustin A. Noonkester** - Participated in Combating Opioids in Schools panel. He is the President and Co-Founder of Brady's Hope.

**David Woodward** - Participated in both panels, Combating Opioids in Schools and Cyber Bullying Leading to Cyber Crimes. He is the Director of the Indiana School Safety Specialist Academy within the Indiana Department of Education.

## MODERATORS:

**State Representative Robert Behning**

Moderated the Combating Opioids in Schools panel.  
Serves in the Indiana House of Representatives.

**State Senator John Crane**

Moderated the Cyber Bullying Leading to Cyber Crimes panel. Serves in the Indiana State Senate.